

Occupy Renewed

With the spring comes a re-energized Occupy movement both globally and locally.

By Vanessa Houk

It seems that everywhere you look in Ashland something is blooming and brand new leaves are slowly and silently opening.

Our gardens are bursting with colors and the sights and smells of so much promise. Anyone who has ever planted something knows the joy that comes with watching a little seed become something more powerful. Social justice work is a lot like gardening. We plant seeds through the sharing of our stories and we feed those through our actions. We work to constantly try to improve the garden. The work itself never seems to end, but we take breaks as we need to and we ask for help from others for we know that sharing the bounty of a garden is what makes it all worthwhile.

Looking back on Occupy Ashland readers may remember that on October 5, 2011 hundreds of Rogue Valley residents gathered in the middle of the Ashland Plaza for what was supposed to be a two day event featuring speakers and live music. There was such a variety of groups present including KSKQ, Oregon Action, Southern Oregon Jobs with Justice, Rogue Valley Veterans for Peace, Citizens for Peace and Justice, Peace House and more. We came together to share our stories, to grieve for what we had lost and to find some inspiration to carry us all forward. In the middle of that an interesting thing happened. Instead of packing up and going in opposite directions at the end of that second day, many people stayed. We became a new group, one that would first occupy the Ashland City Plaza for three weeks in October and then would strive to find solutions to social justice issues on a local and national level.

During the plaza occupation one of my favorite protest signs read "I stand for peace". I spent more than a hundred hours, maybe close to two hundred hours carrying that sign around the plaza during those cool weeks in October. I wasn't alone. We stood in the rain, under darkened skies, as an occasional negative jab was volleyed in our direction because we all felt like we were a part of something much bigger. The Occupy movement was only just

beginning, but in those weeks through our conversations, our actions and the messages on our signs, we planted some seeds in this town.

In fact seeds have since been sewn around the world. In Quebec, hundreds of thousands of students and demonstrators defied a new "anti-protest" law and marched through the streets of downtown Montreal filling the city. In Mexico City, thousands of university students are taking to the streets, demanding greater freedom of speech, mirroring the Arab Spring Demonstrations.

In gardening sometimes it might seem as though a seed doesn't take, but with a little more coaxing, nurturing and patience you might suddenly discover that something is indeed there, after all.

The recent Tea Party/Occupy discussions in Medford are a fine example of that.

I often remind myself that it is easier to be "for" something rather than "against". It's good to try to stay on this side of positivity. I'm for homeless and human rights rather than against the Ashland City Council in spite of the fact that I view this issue differently than most of them (Carol Voisin is an exception to that). In spite of the fact that the Occupy Movement was born out of millions of job losses, foreclosures, bank bailouts, corporate bailouts, and a disappearing middle class. It is fueled by grief and rage, but its member's value nonviolence. Part of Occupy Ashland's statement of intent spells out our dedication to nonviolent actions.

We'll stand for peace. Growth will come from seeds we began planting last fall and change is in the air.

Looking ahead:

Occu-Con 2012 is to commemorate the one year anniversary of Occupy Ashland. We imagine this gathering as a convention for Northwest activists, rabble-rousers and peace keepers to take place the first weekend in October. We're inviting well known speakers, folk musicians and more. Mark your calendars and if you would like to help with planning please contact : ashlandfreepress@activist.com.

By Vanessa Houk

Rogue Valley activists are taking a novel approach to standing up for human rights; they are lying down. In downtown Ashland and outside city council meetings, folks are "napping". These Flash Naps are part of an ongoing campaign to bring attention to Ashland's unconstitutional ban on camping and sleeping.

Social justice advocates warn that the city of Ashland is pursuing a package of policies and legislation that target the poor and homeless. This includes an Exclusion Zone in the downtown area, broadening camping ban and more aggressive police enforcement.

A current city ordinance prohibits sleeping in public, on benches, doorways or even in cars in public spaces. Ashland homeless are targeted and cited for sleeping, which puts a strain on an overburdened court system. This leads to a frustrating cycle where poor residents are ticketed, arrested and released with no resolution in sight.

Occupy Ashland has a campaign to address this issue and has been gathering signatures of citizens who recognize that sleep is a human right. Activists have already gathered over 1000 signatures and hope to have over 5000 by the November elections.

In Ashland there are at least 213 homeless residents, this according to January 2012 homeless count. Homeless advocates point out that Ashland has no shelter or services for the homeless community.

On Tuesday May 29, the Right to Sleep Campaign will host a camp-in on the Ashland Plaza to raise



awareness of the city of Ashland's proposed changes to the camping ban.

Concerned citizens and human rights advocates will gather beginning at 5 pm with blankets, sleeping bags and signs. Many are prepared to stay the night and come together in solidarity to challenge the exclusion zone and camping ban.

"There are many reasons to oppose the exclusion zone", says Amy Godard Navickas, "most importantly is "equality and justice for all "

Camping Ban Harms Community



By Keith Haxton

For too long the citizens of Ashland have lived with a contradiction of values. On the one hand, we have a kind and most generous citizenry, opening up their hearts and their doors to those in need. On the other we have a local government with closed minds, that closes all doors to those who are poor and without permanent shelter.

In Ashland many venues offer help every week, from Uncle Foods to the Emergency Food Bank, from the new day breakfast, which provides food, showers and other basic amenities, to the free meals given at Lithia Park. Yet Ashland has a law which makes it impossible for a person without permanent shelter to sleep within the city.

This law is known as "Camping Prohibited", or title 10 chapter 46 of the Ashland Municipal Code. People other than myself, such as Ralph Temple, have shown why this ordinance violates international law, our United States Constitution, and with decisions made in the court of law. But first, let us examine its effects on the people.

One effect is an antagonism between the community and their elected representatives. As the grassroots campaign Legalize Sleep is showing, Ashland citizens do not support the City's treatment of their people who are poor and without permanent shelter. With City Council considering a new resolution, known as an exclusionary zone, to increase the enforcement level of certain ordinances (e.g. Camping Prohibited), this antagonism is again flaring to the forefront.

Another effect of this ordinance is displacement. Every night many of Ashland's roughly 200 homeless people migrate to the land just south of Ashland where they set up refuge in what is known as "the watershed" or "BLM land." Their presence poses a health and safety risk to all Ashland residents, due to fire and unsanitary conditions. Yet despite many attempts by the authorities to rid this area of the poor seeking its refuge, they only succeed in temporarily pushing this population further back into the forest, soon to return to their exact same campsites just outside the city limits.

This hostility towards our poor happens all over the county. Just as recently as April 26th, the Medford police swept the Bear Creek Greenway and dislocated countless numbers of the poor who are already living in the most unsavory conditions.

This contradiction of values known as "Camping Prohibited" also has the effect of pushing Ashland's poor to Medford, where some forms of shelter are provided by charity and religious groups. This hurts both Ashland and Medford. Forcing people to emigrate for shelter puts additional burdens on those who are most without resources. We in Ashland force those already most disenfranchised to leave their friends, family, and any consistency of surroundings they were holding on to. We also put the burden of helping those whom society has rejected onto a city already in significant turmoil of its own. As many already know, Medford was named the 5th "brokest" city in the nation in a report done by "The Daily Beast" which used income, debt, and unemployment to rate 30 cities.

There are too many effects of this treatment towards those who are struggling with poverty to list here. Finally I will add the effect this criminalization of sleeping has on those charged with such crimes. When one is in the midst of being tried, sentenced or processed, one's life becomes subject to the law's dysfunctional bureaucracy. Using just one example; if one must a judge tells you to be somewhere at a

specific time and place, regardless of any other commitments that would conflict, you are legally bound to be there. Looking for work, eating a free meal, taking a shower and washing clothes are large tasks which often can only be done at prescheduled times and dates. It also gives the recipient of this punishment a blight on their record, lowering their ability to have a respectful resume when looking for work, and also causing social ostracization.

A report by Paul Moss, David Berger and Ralph Temple of the former Southern Oregon Chapter of the ACLU, titled "Decriminalizing Poverty: Reform of Ashland's Camping Ordinance," outlines a clear legal and moral argument for why the ordinance needs reform. It discusses Supreme Court decisions such as Chicago v. Morales, which uphold the ability to loiter, and Jones v. City of Los Angeles. The Jones case, heard in 2007 by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, whose jurisdiction includes Oregon,"...declared that a city that does not provide adequate shelters for the destitute cannot constitutionally enforce against them a law prohibiting sitting, lying or sleeping in public places."

"The Jones opinion concluded that the anti-sleeping ordinance, as applied to homeless persons, violates the 8th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits "cruel and unusual punishments."

Ashland's ordinance also fails to recognize a crucial aspect of Oregon Revised Statutes 203.077 which states,"All municipalities and counties shall: (1) Develop a policy that recognizes the social nature of the problem of homeless individuals camping on public property."

Lastly, Ashland's "Camping Prohibited" ordinance is contrary to international law. "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which the United States is a signatory, provides: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing..."

For the reasons I have stated above I, Keith Haxton, find this law to be unjust and therefore, I do not recognize it as having legitimate authority. I am always willing to discuss these matters with any interested party, and I hope to have much dialog. God bless.

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Really Really Free Market Saturday, June 9th

A Really Really Free Market (RRFM) is like a giant potluck where participants bring, and give away absolutely free, any usable items, skills, ideas, smiles, talents, friendship, excitement, discussions, games and many others things that we as a community can come together and share. An RRFM is a 100% free and non-commercial event, organized by participants just like you. It is a temporary autonomous zone instituting the gift economy as an alternative to the capitalist mode of resource distribution. An RRFM is not just a once a month party, it is an ethos and a way of being that transforms people through its experience and is then carried into other areas of life.

**Really, Really Free Market
Saturday, June 9th - 12 PM**

Triangle Park



Community Radio Needs Our Support!

Underwriters & Sponsors Needed!

Think of it as the little station that could, Ashland's own community radio station, KSKQ 89.5 FM has been trudging along, getting by with the support of volunteers and community members alike. With a small budget the station has evolved into something we can all be proud of. It is the only station in the Rogue Valley that offers shows like Democracy Now and the Workers Independent News, features local musicians and allows people just like you to produce their own radio shows.

A project of the Multicultural Association, KSKQ relies on underwriters, grants and community donations to keep the doors open and the lights on. It has recently come to our attention that the station's funding is getting precariously low. They need community support now more than ever.

KSKQ is currently broadcasting in Ashland but is working to improve the signal and increase the strength valley-wide. Unfortunately this requires more than what dedicated volunteers can offer, KSKQ needs our financial support to be sustainable and to move to the next level.

You can support the station by becoming a member or underwriting your business or organization. To find out more about the value of community radio, call 541-482-3999 or visit www.kskq.org to find out how you can plug in.

There is so much in the current world that I could focus my energy against. so many things I disagree with and grieve for. But this grief is exhausting. I choose instead to invest my precious energy reserves in co-creating a world I want to live in. In that world, I live in a community that believes there is enough. There is enough food and stuff, yes, but also enough time, enough joy, enough celebration. Even more important that these, there is also enough compassion, enough forgiveness, enough love, that we can let go of our constant defenses and be free to be the vulnerable beings we truly are. This community that I choose to co-create and live in shows me that I am enough also. Capitalism teaches me that I must constantly be striving to be worthy and deserving of having even my most basic needs met. I am taught not to give unless I am sure I will get enough paid back to me. The gift culture reminds me that when I receive a gift it is not because I deserve anything. It is because through grace and the loving generosity of another I have been blessed. To give such a blessing is its own payment. The Really Really Free Market is so much more than an alternative to capitalist society. Its an opportunity for us to witness how abundant our community already is. You are enough. Come prepared to give from your overflowing abundance and to humbly receive with gratitude.

~ Sophia Kristi Rychener

Did You Know?

It takes the average U.S. worker nearly a month to make what the average CEO earns in an hour.
Source: tinyurl.com/787ud7e

Ashland Cash Mobs Continue to Support Local Businesses

Dozens of people braved the rain and came out to the second "Cash Mob" which was held at Grilla Bites on the Ashland Plaza on May 4. Supporters drifted into Grilla Bites in groups of two and three, since the rain prevented us from being able to gather in the plaza as we originally planned.

Our next cash mob is planned for Tuesday June 19th at 11 am at the Growers Market on the East Main Street Entrance near the edge of the Armory. Watch for signs and yellow balloons. Come out and support your friends and neighbors and enjoy delicious food, healthy fruits and vegetables, plants, handicrafts, music and more. Our Growers Markets are such a Rogue Valley treasure and we hope that you will help us "Cash Mob" the market and spread some cash around Ashland. For more information about the Ashland Cash Mob call 541-622-9483.

City Response to Homelessness is Short-Sighted

By Vanessa Houk

Ashland is a mecca for artists and writers, poets and dreamers. Wander through the plaza at any given time and among the colorful storefronts, vibrant flowers in Lithia Park and the sounds of buskers on the street corners and in Calle Guanajuato and you can practically feel it in the air, a sense that this community is a safe, healing place. Ashland draws creative people because it is a place where a misfit fits, that is as long as the misfit has enough money to pay rent. As the city of Ashland inches closer to making it a crime to be homeless in Ashland, citizens must examine what the camping ban and exclusion zone is, who it harms and why urban camping laws are used to edge homeless people out of a community.

Ashland's homeless are a mixed lot of folks. We have families who are unsheltered, children, working people who live in vehicles, couch-surf among friends, and homeless teens who have sometimes been pushed out of broken homes. We have veterans who fight internal wars. There are homeless college students who struggle to get an education while sleeping wherever they can find space. Ashland is also home to a fair number of mentally ill people who are homeless and there are many people whose identity does not conform into a neat little description.

Our city council has been working on tightening

up the camping ban, otherwise known as municipal code 10.46 after Ashland Municipal Court dismissed two citations given to a woman who reportedly violated the ordinance, but the judge ruled that there was not sufficient evidence to prove that the woman was temporarily living at the site and therefore dismissed the charges. Very quickly, the city responded by revising the ordinance, to reportedly close the loophole. The newly proposed ordinance will be changed to make it unlawful for a person to use a public space if it "precludes the use of that space by someone else who wants to use it." At the last city council meeting Chief Holderness admitted that his officers will have to use their judgment and the process will be "subjective".

Right on the heels of the changes to the camping ban, the city of Ashland is also working on a "three strikes" exclusion zone for the downtown. This would target individuals who have at least three citations in the downtown area for prohibitive camping (sleeping), unnecessary noise, public urination, assault and harassment. So now, under this new exclusion zone proposal, a homeless person who falls asleep downtown, even hidden out of sight mind you, could get three citations in a single night as we know can and has happened to some of Ashland's homeless and within a few hours that homeless person could effectively be banned from the downtown

for a three month period. Ask yourself if you want that homeless person to be sleeping in the alleyway behind your home, or on the sidewalk in your front yard, because as long as the city provides no other alternative for Ashland's homeless, they will have to fall asleep somewhere.

The messiest problem with all of this is that by citing homeless people for sitting down in the town plaza with a sleeping bag is that it will result in more arrests. Holderness has already stated that many homeless people ignore their citations as they have no way to pay their fines. He envisions that this new proposal will somehow inspire those people to become more responsible and capable of "behaving" even though many of these citations involve the camping/sleep ordinance and sleeping is an involuntary action. Every time the city of Ashland moves to transport a homeless person to the Jackson County Jail for the camping ordinance, they are in fact criminalizing poverty. Every time a homeless person is arrested for camping they are at risk of being denied Section 8 or HUD housing, which has a waiting list that can take years to get to the top of, but is at least one known way that folks can get lifted out of homelessness and back into mainstream society. HUD has some specific federal guidelines regarding who can be banned from their housing and says that each individual office can determine if someone should be eligible for housing in spite of a criminal record and will be determined on a case by case basis, but common sense tells us that any criminal record could be used to keep someone out of HUD housing.

Do you see the cycle of homelessness that the city is perpetuating?

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Readers might remember the single port-a-potty that was granted by the city council on a trial basis after the Homelessness Steering Committee asked for three? Several issues ago we called upon the city to place a trash can nearby after hearing that maintenance workers reported there were no acts of vandalism but there seemed to be a need for a trash receptacle for discarded clothing. The city has not responded to this need. We call upon the city and the city council to make it a priority and see that a trash can is placed somewhere near that corner. Let's all do what we can to see that this trial port-a-potty, the only restroom facility that is open 24 hours in the downtown is indeed a success.

...

I saved the best for last. Thank you to the homeless people who came to the aid of the young mother in Lithia Park after someone snatched her purse and ran. Reportedly several homeless men stopped that suspect and kept him from leaving the park until police arrived and were able to make an arrest. I don't know all of your names, but I want you to know that we recognize that your actions represent the majority of homeless people here in Ashland. I want you to know that you fit!

Maslow Project Reaches Out to Homeless Youth

Caseworkers counts Ashland homeless youth population at 114

By Jason Houk

Maslow Project is a goal oriented non-profit agency that provides children, youth and families basic needs and support services. They promote a safety net model that utilizes a comprehensive web of support through agency partnerships.

From their resource center in Medford, and working directly in schools in Ashland, Medford and Rogue River, Maslow staff provides basic needs and emergency assistance to insure the stability and success. Their biggest goal is helping homeless students graduate and be successful.

Ali LaJeunesse, a caseworker working in the Ashland schools, points to a growing homeless youth population in need of support. "At the beginning of the school year it was 99 identified youth. At this point after working four months in Ashland I've identified and additional fifteen."

LaJeunesse explains that "They can be living in the streets or in their cars, they could be living in substandard housing with no electricity or water. They can be living in hotels and motels and in transitional shelters. They can be doubled up with another family or friends, couch surfing."

At the emergency meeting on homeless youth in Ashland this Mother's Day, Lacey Renae, a Mental Health Councilor and caseworker for Maslow spelled out the challenge facing homeless youth. "Kids are leaving home because of abuse and neglect. Because of substance abuse in the house and its so unsafe for them to go back home. Its just not an option." Explains Renae, "this is a really specific group of kids who are really struggling."

Much of their outreach is working in the schools where students can receive case management and services such as working towards getting a GED, increasing attendance, job skills, resume building, life skills and long-term stability.

"We really focus on stabilizing youth and building their resiliency and their coping skills so that they can become productive members of society," says Renae.

Maslow's street outreach program delivers supplies and information to children, youth and their families who are on the street. "With our street outreach program we really start with small successes... but we really encourage them that

there is something, even if it is a small something, that they are working towards" says Renae.

"At our resource center we have Jessica's Closet, which primarily serves age zero to 21. You can get clothes there... they keep it young and contemporary... we really focus on providing them with quality clothing."

She went on to explain that there are many barriers that come up around food. To get a food basket from local food banks you need to be 18 and have ID. "Being able to come into Maslow Project and get a food bag... is a great service that we also offer," says Renae.

"We really have a grassroots model thats about putting the client in the center. And we are able to focus on what they need and what services and in the community and provide those resources for them."

Maslow Project is primarily supported by the community and by partnerships with civic organizations and foundations. They are looking for support and volunteers, They need "basic needs" food, clothing hygiene and school supplies. "If you want to get involved creating a clothing drive of food drive that would be a great way to support us," says Renae.

Peace Vets at Boatnik

Report and photo by Allen Hallmark

Buoyed by the presence of Leah Bolger, president of national Veterans for Peace, three members of VFP 141 in Bandon and several members of Occupy Grants Pass & Citizen for Peace & Justice, VFP 156 had a good-sized contingent in the Boatnik Parade in Grants Pass on Saturday morning despite the light rain and cool temps.



Our entry was headed by Joyce Segers carrying the American flag. Joyce's husband was a Korean War veteran who suffered terribly with PTSD and guilt from having been an artillery spotter, calling in fire on thousands of North Korean and Chinese troops. Joyce said she was very proud to march with veterans who know these horrors and want to abolish war.

Chapter President Daniel Guy and Vietnam Army vet Dan Davis carried the VFP 156 banner. They were followed by white Prius festooned with VFP flags, driven by Velma Woods with two World War II veterans as passengers. Next came our large white Peace Dove carried by four folks. After the dove, came Ed Pool and Frank Quinn from the Bandon VFP Chapter 141 carrying their chapter's banner.

Six people bounced around the banners and dove carrying signs honoring soldiers who are displaying the "courage to resist" by refusing deployment to war zones.

Each sign had a large photo of the soldier/resister and his name and other information about him or her. Ruth Dailey and Ivend & Kathy Holen made these impressive signs.

After the parade, we made our way to the home of Loree Arthur, who generously opened her home to us. About 20 of us enjoyed turkey or garden burgers, tuna sandwiches and salad galore and then got a real education about Veterans for Peace on the national level from Leah Bolger, who is just a great leader. We are so proud of her being the first woman and the first Oregonian to head VFP.

“Save Our Communities!” Foreclosure & Debt Rally Victory Celebration!

Via Project REconomy

This powerful event will include homeowner victory stories in the Rogue Valley, how foreclosures are affecting our economy, and what we can do about it presented by Project REconomy co-founders Nancie Koerber and Mark Thomas. They will cover information compiled over the last three years of research, work with over 1,000 Oregon families facing and fighting their foreclosures, work with lawmakers and attorneys to stop foreclosures, and national trainings. Questions addressed will include:

- What is an "illegal foreclosure?" How can homeowners protect themselves?
- Who is getting modifications, who is not, and are they the solution?
- How is foreclosure impacting our communities?
- What can we do to hold big banks accountable, stop foreclosure & build strong local economies that work for Main Street, not just Wall Street?

The purpose of the Foreclosure/Debt Rally is to build a movement of educated & empowered communities across Oregon to take action, stop foreclosure, and bring money back into our communities.

Global Warming and the Labor Movement

By the ESSN Global Warming Committee

The Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network/Jobs with Justice (ESSN/JwJ) has called upon national Jobs with Justice to initiate a discussion among all its chapters on the topic of how the labor movement should address global warming. ESSN/JwJ might do work on a number of social justice issues, but global warming is not merely one of a long list of problems that the world faces; it could cause millions of people to suffer the death penalty, including many who are not yet born, and thus have no say in present-day decisions. The multiple disasters that unchecked global warming will visit upon our planet would negate whatever successes that the labor movement and its allies might achieve.

Time is short. The government of China has made concessions in announcing a cap on energy consumption, and agreeing to be bound by a future international global warming agreement. China is waiting to see how the U.S. will respond, but politicians will need to feel pressure before they do what is necessary; the labor movement is still the strongest of U.S. social movements, so should be part of the political deliberations. The labor movement could put its organizational skills to good use.

The issue of jobs has long been a bone of contention between the environmental and labor movements. Solutions to the global warming problem will involve many people losing their jobs, say in the automobile and coal industries. The Pacific Northwest has to face the fact that logging causes half of greenhouse gas emissions. Finding new livelihoods for displaced workers could be the part of the problem that the labor movement should particularly address.

By taxing the rich, governments could create green jobs, say in public transit. The U.S. government could stop wasting taxpayers' money on war-making industries, and instead convert them into renewable energy enterprises. Renewable energy could power national high-speed rail to reduce the need for air travel. Solar power in Eastern Oregon, plus wind power and tidal power on the Oregon coast would provide jobs that would be harder of outsource to other countries. All these industries could feature worker cooperatives in which the workers hire the managers, instead of the other way around. New jobs would help create more jobs as the money circulates.

Some people could get jobs in sustainable forestry, though the need for less wood consumption, particularly in housing, will mean the loss of jobs. Industrial hemp could provide plywood and other building materials, paper, clothing, and food. Teachers and health care workers would be a part of an environmentally-sound economy, and the labor movement would play a big part in defending such jobs.

Workers who lose their jobs due to global warm-

ing legislation might not be able to find a green job. People over forty years old might face particular difficulties. Coal and timber industry workers live in rural areas, where new jobs could be scarce.

The labor movement and social justice organizations could propose something like the late labor leader Tony Mazzocchi's idea of paying people not to work. Workers who lose their jobs because of efforts to fight global warming could get the equivalent of social security disability checks. Since most people would probably prefer to work, the money could be taxed away if they end up getting jobs that pay over a certain amount. For workers in rural areas, these monthly payments could be a little subsidy for small organic farms that would, among other things, fix carbon in the soil.

Fighting global warming will cause economic dislocation--the economies of the world's richest countries need to shrink. People will need to stop thinking that those who do not own cars are living in a degraded condition. ESSN/JwJ's social justice work will help in easing the transition. Universal health insurance would mean that workers would not need to worry about medical expenses they might face after losing their jobs.

The Eugene/Springfield Solidarity Network/Jobs with Justice brings together labor unions, religious congregations, and community organizations to support the civil and economic rights of all working people -- especially the right to a decent standard of living, the right to a stable job, and the right to organize. To contact ESSN/JwJ, telephone 541-736-9041 or e-mail essn@efn.org.

Understanding Trade, Local Economy and WALMART

By Wes Brain for Rogue IMC

As Walmart celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, we will paint the true story of Walmart and how they undermine our values and re-write the rules of our society. We have plenty of fodder here in Southern Oregon! Walmart continues to be prolific with stores in Grants Pass, Klamath Falls, Talent, Eagle Point and now being constructed is the monstrous new eyesore, the Walmart superstore going up near the South Medford interchange of Interstate-5.

An over 7-year-long campaign spearheaded by Medford Citizens For Responsible Development (MCRD) gallantly fought off this new Walmart superstore taking the "responsible development" issue all the way to the Oregon Supreme Court who ultimately ruled in Walmart's favor. For those who worked so hard for so many years it is particularly disheartening to view this new blight as the hammers swing and build a new icon for our economy, one that is sucking the life from our Southern Oregon community.

Southern Oregon Jobs with Justice will be engaging in the National Walmart Campaign and we will be Bringing It Local. SOJwJ is looking for a few hard-core-planners who are ready to roll up sleeves and get to work. We will creatively put together a big educational lesson plan for Southern Oregon: "Understanding Trade, our Local Economy and WALMART." Serious inquiries only!

For more information call Wes at 541-482-6988 or visit www.sojwj.org

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Support Ashland Free Press!

The Ashland Free Press aspires to bring you the latest information on social justice issues that affect the Rogue Valley and showcase some of the good work that is happening here. We welcome articles which are 400-500 words, teach us about a related topic and we are especially likely to print articles with a clear call to action. In other words it isn't enough to get folks riled up about an issue. Tell us what we can do to change it. AFP is printed once or twice a month at A Street Printing, Southern Oregon's most radical printers (Thanks Steve and Whitney!) Your generous contributions keep us going, give us courage and hope and pay for a lot of ink and paper. Donations can be sent to: Ashland Free Press—258 A Street #1, Ashland 97520

Article submissions can be emailed to ashlandfreepress@activist.com

Rogue Valley Responds to GM Menace

By Eli Dumitru

In February of this year, local organic farmer Chris Hardy of Ashland’s Village Farm, found that genetically engineered sugar beets were being grown for seed here in the Rogue Valley by Syngenta. Genetically engineered plants are plants that have been artificially engineered to contain genes from unrelated species, such as inserting a fish gene into a tomato plant. They also engineer plants to make their own pesticides inside every cell of the plant. Genetically engineered organisms, also popularly known as genetically modified organisms (GMOs), are created by large multinational corporations like Monsanto and Syngenta, who say that GMOs are so different from regular plants that they deserve to be patented. At the same time they claim that GMOs are so similar to regular plants that they shouldn’t be regulated. Both of these contradictory opinions have been bought by the government, because Presidents, including Bush and Obama, have appointed Monsanto lobbyists to positions within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

A representative for Syngenta told Chris Hardy that they have genetically engineered plots all up and down the Rogue Valley. The USDA said that GMO corn, alfalfa, canola and trees are being grown locally. One of the problems due to GMO crops is that wind and insects can carry GMO pollen for miles, and that pollen can contaminate the crops of other farmers. Organic crops are, by definition, non-genetically engineered. So when an organic farmer’s crops are contaminated by genetically engineered pollen, they become non-organic by definition. This is a clear threat to the livelihood of organic farmers, as well as to all of us who want to eat organic food, and don’t want to eat genetically engineered food.

In response to the news about GMO crops planted locally, Chris Hardy put out a call to the community to gather to discuss how to meet this challenge. This meeting led to the creation of GMO-Free Jackson County, which is working toward passing a County ordinance banning the growing of genetically-engineered crops. An initiative has been filed with the County and will hopefully be approved for signature collection before the end of May. If GMO-Free Jackson County is successful in collecting about 5,000 signatures by August 8, the initiative will go on the ballot in the November election.

The USDA regulations require a four-mile buffer between GMO crops and non-GMO crops being grown for seed. Syngenta has ignored this requirement, leaving organic farmers with the daunting challenge of having to sue to protect their farms. Ashland High School's Grizz Garden, where students grow food organically, is within four miles of another Syngenta field and students are not going to save seeds for beets and chard

this year because Syngenta’s patented GMO pollen is blowing across their fields. Grizz Garden is not protected by the USDA because they do not sell their seed commercially.

GMO alfalfa has been de-regulated and now can be planted anywhere. We will likely see disastrous consequences of this policy for organic dairies, organic beef producers, and alfalfa growers who provide organic forage for others. GMO corn is also being grown in our valley.

There is hope. Two counties in California and several countries around the world have banned the growing of GMO crops. It will probably be a challenge to get this initiative petition passed, so if you want to help, you are welcome to join the campaign.

You can check out GMO-Free Jackson County at their website at www.gmofreejacksoncounty.org where you can sign up to Get Involved. Find them on Facebook by searching GMO Free Jackson County.

If you have organizational skills and want to help, you are welcome to go to their regular meetings at 9 AM Mondays at the Ashland Library.

GMO-Free Jackson County Meet-up Planned

The public is invited to a Meet-up in Medford at which GMO-Free Jackson County will provide information about genetically engineered foods in general and give an update on their initiative petition to create an ordinance that would ban growing genetically engineered crops in Jackson County. This meet-up is to provide an opportunity for people in Talent, Phoenix, Medford, Central Point and Jacksonville (or other cities in Jackson County) to meet one another and explore ways to support the campaign.

The Oregon Office of the Secretary of State acknowledges receipt of a draft ballot title as follows: Genetically Engineered food offered for retail sale must be labeled as such not labeled "natural". A total of 87,213 petition signatures are required by July 6, 2012.

Copies of the proposed ordinance and signature sheets will be available for those who wish to receive petition circulator training and help gather signatures. Feel free to bring a friend.

MEET-UP IN MEDFORD
Sunday, June 3, 2012
4:00 – 6:00 PM
Central Library
205 S Central Av
Medford, OR

Can you help circulate petitions? If so contact
GMO-Free Jackson County at :
gmofreejacksoncounty@gmail.com

Citizens Speak Out Against Smart Meters

By Oriana Spratt

Another tragedy narrowly averted!

One of the sixteen Ashland citizens who spoke at the last Ashland City Council meeting presented the results of a hired EMF consultant who recently tested the existing Ashland Smart Meter radiation levels around town with the "upgraded" Itron meters that WERE scheduled to be installed on ALL Ashland homes and businesses (see pics at end to see if you have one already).

Test results show that these meters are currently emitting 15,000 microwatts of EMF per square meter - all day and all night - with intermittent higher spikes.

The readings were done at a 6-ft radius and of course the radiation traverses walls and goes much farther than that. That's up to 100 times the emission of a cell phone - only you can't hang up. We came close to having every home in Ashland radiating 15,000 microwatts of RF radiation 24X7, as many cities do, all overlapping in range...animals, birds and all life get the same 24-hour EMF shower. Compare that with the older Smart Meters which emit 100-500 microwatts at same distance, and analog meters. (**NO RADIATION**)

Although it turns out studies show that even the accuracy of Smart Reader readings are questionable, and could be electronically hijacked / tampered with (think electronic voting) the excellent point was made by several speakers and Council members that automated electric readings could also be done through Internet cables (the Smart Meter concept was originally sold to the Ashland Council on the basis that AFN could do this!) and DSL or cable phone lines. The excellent point was also made that replacing people with technology is not always true progress.

Speakers also pointed out that 14,000 California residents have reported hyper-electromagnetic sensitivity and other health issues after Smart Meter installations, and that Smart Meters are banned and/or being removed in many locations nationwide. The high cost of installing and then removing Smart Meters - both now, and in the future when evidence of harm becomes clearer - was not addressed, but surely dwarfs the labor cost of monthly meter reading. Potential litigation costs were not addressed either.

Thank God we have such a wise City Council...high fives to Carol Voisin (who favored a continued moratorium on further Smart Meter installations but was not seconded), Dennis Slattery (thank him for his NO FEE recommendation), Mike Morris, who is well-informed on the inaccuracy of Smart Meter readings, and Mayor Stromberg, who pointed out the growing evidence that EMF health effects are cumulative.



Proposed Itron meters.

Here is how to contact / thank any of these fine folks:

Ashland Electric Department:
tuneberl@ashland.or.us
Mayor John Stromberg
john@council.ashland.or.us
Councilor Michael Morris
mike@council.ashland.or.us
Councilor Russ Silbiger
Silbigeruss@council.ashland.or.us
Councilor David Chapman
david@council.ashland.or.us
Councilor Dennis Slattery
dennis@council.ashland.or.us
Councilor Greg Lemhose
Lemhousegreg@council.ashland.or.us
Councilor Carol Voisin
carol@council.ashland.or.us

A proposed \$120 one-time plus \$20/month 'opt-out' fee was dismissed, so call 488-5357 to opt out of Not-So-Smart Meters, free.

Research information for yourself about minimizing EMF radiation from all devices in your environment...very enlightening, with alternatives presented.

We're all in this one together...

Oriana

Background: The city of Ashland is installing electric “smart” meters that emit radiowave (microwave) frequency radiation every 30 seconds around the clock. Though these meters are only being used for monthly driveway readings, they have the same radiation levels and frequencies as other smart meters that have become the target of concern and controversy throughout the country.

The California PUC has received more than 14,000 complaints of health problems occurring after smart meters were installed. 11 counties and 44 cities in California oppose mandatory smart meter installation, 9 have passed ordinances making smart meter installation illegal in their jurisdictions. Similar controversy is occurring all across the country as citizens become more informed and aware of the health risks from smart meters. The Ashland city council is now discussing whether or not they will allow citizens to opt out of having a smart meter. If they adopt this policy, there will be a one time fee as well as a monthly fee to those who choose not to have wireless meters. There is currently a moratorium on changing out the old meters until the council completes their consideration. Your voice is vital in this discussion now!

What can you do?

Opt out: E-mail the Ashland Electric Department and ask to opt out of the Smart Meter program. If you have an analog meter, request that they do not install a smart meter. If you have one of the other meters, request that they restore the analog meter that they replaced it with. **Write to the mayor and city council:** Request that the city to continue the moratorium on new electric meter installations until they thoroughly explore all electric meter options to provide the least radiation and the most options for citizens. Request an opt out option that doesn’t have financial penalties. **What are the health risks from smart meters?**

Established research on radio frequency radiation provides significant cause for concern. Here is a quote from Dr. David Carpenter, a Harvard Medical School-trained physician who worked for the New York State Department of Public Health for 18 years before becoming Dean of the School of Public Health at the University of Albany, where he currently directs the Institute for Health and the Environment: “We have evidence...that exposure to radio frequency radiation...increases the risk of cancer, increases damage to the nervous system, causes electrosensitivity, has adverse reproductive effects and a variety of other effects on different organ systems. There is no justification for the statement that Smart Meters have no adverse health effects.” He further advises, “An informed person should demand that they be allowed to keep their analog meter.”

Rural Organizing Project Conference Wrap-Up

ROP Conference Report 2012

By Raven Majel Playfaire

Conferences like this remind me of why I moved to Oregon last summer and why I started being an activist when I was just 17. Not to mention why I’m proud to be an Occupier!

The morning sessions started with a talk show style conversation with two of the founders of ROP. One was a gay woman and one was a Latino gentleman born in Los Angeles. They both talked about the struggles they had experienced within their own movements fighting for gay rights and the rights of immigrant workers, but they also focused on the bond they formed over the years as they discovered their movements had they also focused more in common than not.

The second session was a panel of about a dozen folks from across the state from all different rural towns and organizations. Each one talked about what they have accomplished in their town over the last year. Occupy Roseburg talked about their homeless situation and Postal workers talked about keeping 22 rural post offices open.

The third section was a breakout session where everyone met up in groups of 8-15 people and we were asked a series of questions about the successes and challenges we faced within our organization over the last year. I came up with about 5 for each category, including our recent successful Flash Nap on the Plaza.

After a lovely Mexican/vegetarian lunch provided by PCUN, one of our sponsors for the event, the afternoon was spent in more breakout sessions in which we were able to choose from a menu of topics. I was torn in this session between two groups, one was how to build your base (membership, constituents etc.) and the other was occupy the media. I was lucky that they were meeting in the same room, so I grabbed the paperwork from one, and listened to the other. I realized as I listened to the facilitator at Occupy the Media group, that there were a lot of local and

state wide resources for media that we have not tapped into locally. We have it so good with Vanessa and Jason who do so much for this Ashland Free Press your holding in your hand, that we’ve had it easy. God/dess knows we love them for it! And we all will continue to support them, but we are resting on our Laurels a wee bit too much in my humble opinion. Press releases will hopefully be more forthcoming in the future!

The second and final session for the afternoon was again a plethora of choices, and once again I was torn between the Move To Amend group and the Activism in Services group. I said hello to the Move to Amend folks and went on with a fellow Ashlander, to the Services group. There we focused on ways to help our services. Several Postal Union members talked about the work they have done to keep the small town post offices open, as we were set to loose as many as twenty-two post offices in towns where it may actually be the only building in the community. The result is that not only have ALL the post offices been Occupied and kept from being closed, but some of them now have new community centers for people to visit, to use a few new computer stations and actually talk to each other; a place to meet in the dead of winter!

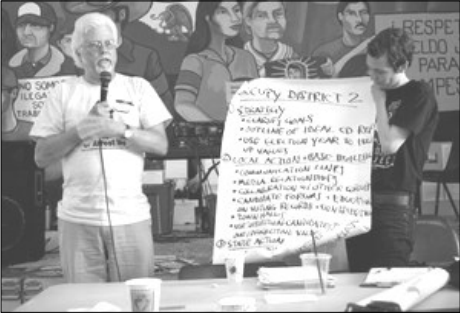
We also talked about homelessness. Occupy Roseburg has been going out to meet their homeless in their own encampments and ask the homeless what they need. Roseburg had a weekend camp out at a local park where the police have been harassing and ticketing the homeless. The homeless told them that they felt safer when the Occupiers were there because they knew they would get at least one night’s peaceful sleep. I remember observing the same thing with our homeless when we had our Occupy encampment last October. For those 22 days glorious days, our homeless felt safe.

The Rural Organizing Project is truly an amazing organization, a gift of love and labor for Oregon residents. It was very obvious that without it the Latino immigrant community and the BGLQT communities would never have formed the bonds and bridges they have. And it is obvious from the enthusiasm that people who had attended in past years that these sorts of bonds are common and will continue to grow for many years to come.

Sunday morning we were invited to the Occupy Brunch and it was the final event I attended for the

weekend. There were folks from small Occupies all over the state, Oregon having more rural occupations than any other state in the union! Represented were Occupy Klamath Falls, Ashland, Grants Pass, Cottage Grove, Bend, Corvallis, Roseburg, Eugene, Myrtle Creek, Astoria and probably several others that I’m forgetting at the moment.

We talked about where we saw Occupy going over the next several years and what we can do to support each other. It was agreed that reaching out to the media and networking with each other was a good start. Knowing ROP is there to help is a comfort and an amazing resource. We also discussed how to avoid strategies that clearly don’t work. But over all we all came away with the feeling that we had all made lasting bonds that would serve us well into the future!



Allen Hallmark representing Citizens for Peace and Justice and Occupy Grants Pass presenting.

More than 150 people, representing 66 human dignity groups and 27 of Oregon's 36 counties, convened over 48 hours for a weekend of strategy, connection, movement building and storytelling.

The Democratic Economies/Occupy Rural Oregon track developed next steps for work around debt, privatization, Citizens United and shared strategies on building power for the long haul in election season.

For more information visit www.rop.org.

Wall Street Scoreboard	
Peaceful Protestors Arrested	4,542
Corrupt Banksters Arrested	0

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Activist Community Calendar - June 2012

Email your announcements to AshlandFreePress@Activist.com or call the AFP Hotline, 541-622-9483.



Occupy The Art

A free art workshop for kids.
Saturday, June 2 - 2:30 PM to 4:30 PM
Ashland Art Center
357 East Main Street in Ashland.
All ages welcome with parental supervision

Occupy Ashland Networking Potluck Picnic

*Explore New Opportunities for
Collaboration for a Better World*

**Sunday, June 3
Noon to 2 p.m.**
Ashland Downtown Plaza

Occupy Ashland is hosting a networking picnic. Diverse organizations and groups who support the interests and welfare of the 99% will be there.

Please bring your favorite dishes, including your own tableware (in the interest of curtailing waste we won't supply paper/plastic), and invite your organization members, board, and staff, for a relaxing, inspiring two hours of activist networking and picnicking together.

It will be a smorgasbord of ideas, camaraderie, and great food making for a truly wonderful Sunday community gathering!

For more information, contact Linda Sturgeon 541 890-6996 or lindasturgeons@gmail.com

Occupy Ashland Move-to-Amend Working Group Tuesday, June 5, 6 p.m. Ashland City Council Chambers or TBA

The group meets on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month. The Ashland City Council meeting follows at 7 p.m.

Occupy Ashland Presents: Movie Night @ Peace House! The Foreclosure Education Series



The third Friday of each month we are presenting movies concerning the current political and economic crisis in our country. Come join us for education and discussion. Friday, June 15, movie starts at 7 p.m.

**Capitalism, a Love Story.
Film by Michael Moore
Friday, June 15—7 PM
Peace House
543 S. Mountain Ave.**

On the 20-year anniversary of his groundbreaking masterpiece "Roger & Me," Michael Moore's "Capitalism: A Love Story" comes home to the issue he's been examining throughout his career: the disastrous impact of corporate dominance on the everyday lives of Americans.

Occupy Medford General Assembly NEW TIME & LOCATION Saturdays, 10 AM Alba Park—Medford

Occupy Medford General Assemblies will be held on Saturdays at Alba Park starting at 10 am. EVERYONE is welcome to attend.

Occupy Ashland GA Downtown Plaza

With Spring's return, the Occupy Ashland General Assemblies are taking place on the Ashland Plaza on Sundays at 2 pm. For more information visit occupyashlandoregon.org

Homelessness Action Committee Meeting June 7 - 2 PM Gresham Room, Ashland Public Library

Oregon Action Summer Civic Engagement Voter Registration Training & Mobilization Saturday, June 2 9:30 AM to 12 noon Medford Library, Adams Room

This year is an incredible year for social and political change. On issues of health care, education, immigration rights and money in politics a new generation of activists and involved students are taking the forefront in moving for fundamental social change. A new spirit of civic engagement that is generating positive social change from diverse communities in Oregon will be gathering for our June 2 mobilization

Action steps include non-partisan voter registration within our local communities of color, low income residents and Lesbian, Gay, Bi and Trans (LGBT); leadership training, voter education and political participation in local and national elections. RSVP rich@oregonaction.org (541) 772-4029.

McKenzie River Gathering Foundation Social Justice Events



MRG is hosting two great events in Ashland in early June. You can learn everything you need to know to get started with your estate planning and the following night, get together with other progressive folks to talk politics with MRG's Executive Director, Sharon Gary -Smith!

**Estate Planning 101
Monday, June 4th from 6:30 - 9pm
Science Works Museum,
1500 East Main Street, Ashland**

Take advantage of this great opportunity to learn from local attorney, Allen Drescher. Whether you have your estate plans all set but want to get the latest information on what's changed in the world of estate law, or you need to get started with your planning, this workshop will provide you with the basics you'll need to move forward. For more information, please contact Sheryl Sackman or call her at 503-289-1517.

**Social Justice Happy Hour at Dragonfly Café
Tuesday, June 5th from 5:30 - 7:30pm
241 Hargadine, Ashland**

Stop by to meet and mingle with fellow southern Oregon activists and talk with MRG's Executive Director, Sharon Gary-Smith. Learn more about Oregon's progressive movement and what's happening in Southern Oregon. We'll have snacks and non-alcoholic drinks. No-host bar. RSVP: Sheryl Sackman or call 503-289-1517

Red Earth Descendants Veteran's Powwow

June 2nd and 3rd.
VA Domiciliary
White City, OR
Grand Entries Saturday Noon and 7 p.m.;
Sunday @ Noon
Honor our Veterans and enjoy the weekend at the powwow!

Next R.E.D. Organizational Meeting for Elder~Youth Conference

Tuesday, June 12 @ 6:30 p.m.
SOU Student Family Housing Community Room
1361 Quincy Street, Ashland, OR

7th Annual Elder~Youth Conference

June 27-30 on the Rogue River in Gold Hill see our website Home Page and calendar for further details www.redearthdescendants.org

Rogue Valley Grower's & Crafter's Market

Community of over 100 vendors and hosting four markets per week — March through November in Ashland and Medford — offering the finest in locally grown produce, plants and flowers, along with specialty foods, cheese, meat, baked goods, wine, ice cream, and hand-made arts and crafts.

Market Hours & Locations
Tuesdays— 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Ashland Market
National Guard Armory 1420 E. Main Street
Thursdays— 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Medford Market
Medford Armory 1701 S. Pacific Highway
Saturdays— 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Ashland Saturday Market Oak Street in the Heart of Downtown
9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Medford Saturday Market
Black Oak Village across from RVMC

CPJ Film Nights Tuesday, June 5 The Green Wave



The Citizens for Peace and Justice Film Nights are on 1st Tuesdays, at 7 p.m. - Lidgate Hall, Medford Congregational United Church of Christ 1801 E. Jackson Street, Medford

For further information, contact Allen Hallmark.
E-mail: Hallmark@mind.net



Save the Music, Summer Solstice Benefit for Community Radio KSKQ

**June 23rd, 5-10 PM
Jackson Wellsprings, CASBAH STAGE**

Spread the word! KSKQ's fundraiser concert is happening on June 23rd at the Casbah stage at the Wellsprings from 5-10 pm with lots of live music! We hope you can join us and show support for Ashland's own community radio.

New Day Social Justice Breakfast Potluck

**June 15th - 8 AM
Talent Community Center**

Community vs. Corporate Rights

**Two workshops led by
Paul Cienfuegos
June 16 10 am—3 pm.
Medford Congregational Church
of Christ—1801 E. Jackson, Medford**

Paul provides a wealth of information, especially vital historic facts about corporations' rise to power that we were never taught. To register call 541-772-8860.

GMO Free Rogue Valley Fundraising Event! Family Style 3-course Dinner in Support of the GMO Initiative

**Saturday, June 9, 2012
6:00 PM
Quaker Meeting House / Peace House
543 S Mountain Av
Ashland, OR
\$25 per setting**

For Reservations, and a chance to specify vegetarian option, call Chloe: (541) 535-1975



Happy 100th Birthday Woody Guthrie Featuring Feeney, Ross & Moss The Hard Travelin' Tour

Labor singer and hellraiser Anne Feeney will be in Ashland on Saturday, July 7th at the Ashland First Congregational United Church of Christ 717 Siskiyou Blvd. Ashland. At 7:30 PM. For more information call Wes at 541-482-6988

Women in Black Silent Vigils for Peace

Meet in Grants Pass, Cave Junction, Roseburg, Medford, and Ashland to stand silently for Peace.

In Ashland, every Friday from 12:00 - 12:30 pm on the Ashland Plaza.

In Ashland, first and third Saturdays from 11 am - 11:30 am on the Ashland Plaza.

In Medford, every Wednesday, 12:00 to 12:30 pm in Vogel Plaza, corner of Main and Central .

In Grants Pass, every Thursday during the Winter months from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. next to the Post Office. Contact person Jerry Reed of Citizens for Peace and Justice at 541-474-6847

In Cave Junction, every Monday from 12:00 - 12:30 pm at the County building

In Roseburg, every Friday from 12:30 - 1:00 pm in front of the Fire Station on Garden Valley Blvd.